



Assessing Program Quality and Delivery

The juvenile justice outcomes promised by evidence-based programs are only achievable if the programs are delivered as designed and the curricula are followed. All too often, a jurisdiction will implement a program and wonder why it is not getting the same results as the research showed. How do we ensure we are getting the best results possible for youth? We assess program model fidelity.

Program Model Fidelity

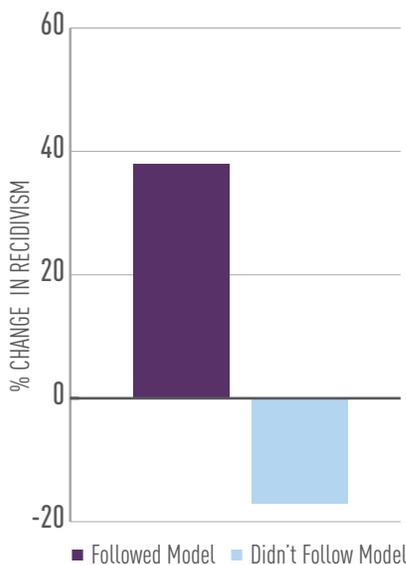
Program model fidelity is implementing a program the right way. Research has shown that when a program is delivered the right way, or with fidelity to the model, recidivism rates for program participants involved in the juvenile justice system can be significantly reduced. The graph to the left is an example highlighting the delivery of Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and the change in recidivism rates when the model is followed (purple) and not followed (blue). Above the line indicates that there was a positive change in recidivism, meaning it was reduced; below the line indicates a negative change in recidivism of youth, meaning it increased. In other words, when FFT is delivered according to the model as designed we see better outcomes for youth. In fact, FFT resulted in a 38 percent reduction in recidivism when the program was delivered with fidelity. When it was not, recidivism increased 17 percent.

Ongoing assessment of program model fidelity is crucial. The goal of the juvenile justice system is to address the needs of youth through treatment and accountability, and we do not want to inadvertently reduce their chances of success by implementing programs poorly.

Program Model Fidelity in Georgia's Juvenile Justice System

In 2012, Georgia embarked on comprehensive juvenile justice reform to reduce out-of-home placements, reduce costs and improve outcomes for youth. By May 2013, Governor Nathan Deal signed into law a set of policies designed to improve

FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY (FFT)



Barnoski, R. (2009). 'Providing Evidence-Based Programs With Fidelity in Washington State Juvenile Courts: Cost Analysis'. Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

CJI'S PROGRAM MODEL FIDELITY FRAMEWORK

Training Sites to Conduct Model Fidelity Assessments

- Model fidelity research and methods
- Using model fidelity assessment tools
- How to provide feedback

Assessment Tools

- Model Fidelity Initial Interview Guide
- Program Director Interview Guide
- Program Staff Interview Guide
- File Review Checklist
- Group Observation Form
- Program Participant Survey
- Model Fidelity Site Visit Report Template

Coaching to ensure quality implementation of the assessment process

Model Fidelity Report Card to track program fidelity over time

youth outcomes in the juvenile justice system. By ensuring youth facility placements were reserved only for the most serious offenses, the state is projected to save \$85 million over five years. Those savings would, in turn, be reinvested to bolster evidence-based programs in the community.

Georgia invested \$5.6 million in FY 2014 and \$6.8 million the following year in a fiscal incentive grant program to fund community based programs. The state's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) manages the grants and oversees contracted community-based providers for the delivery of five evidence-based programs. With the state's investment in the grant program, the CJCC wanted to make sure the programs being delivered were consistent with the program manuals and the methods of delivery that had been rigorously evaluated. But how would CJCC know if the programs were implemented with fidelity?

Georgia's selection as one of three inaugural states to participate in the Smart on Juvenile Justice Initiative of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provided an answer to that question. OJJDP's technical assistance provider for the initiative, the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI), is charged with helping states implement their reforms and build capacity to sustain the reforms over time. CJI brought expertise to Georgia in assessing program model fidelity.

Assessing program model fidelity needs to be an ongoing process. Rather than coming in, conducting an assessment, and handing the findings and recommendations to the CJCC, CJI provided a framework to assist CJCC in the development of a model fidelity assessment process to continue into the future. CJI's framework (see sidebar) includes training, the provision of assessment tools, coaching and a reporting structure to monitor program fidelity over time.

Georgia recognized the importance of not only selecting programs with a research base, but also investing the fiscal and human resources to ensure those programs are delivered with fidelity. To apply the framework CJI offered, Georgia hired a Model Fidelity Coordinator and invested in a team of consultants to conduct the assessments and provide feedback and coaching to the contracted program providers. All were trained by CJI on not only the fidelity assessment process but the research behind program model fidelity. By embracing this process, and integrating program model fidelity into regular practice, Georgia is ensuring quality programs are being delivered to set youth on a path to a brighter future.

This project was supported by Grant # 2014-ZB-BX-K011 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.



FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT:

Kristin Bechtel
Managing Associate
Crime and Justice Institute
at CRJ
Boston, MA
KBechtel@crj.org
or (617) 482-2520
www.crj.org/cji



At Community Resources for Justice, we believe that society gains when all people are given the support and tools they need to lead responsible, productive and dignified lives. For more than 135 years, some of society's most challenged citizens have benefitted from the programs and services we provide, and the policy reforms for which we have advocated, in 41 states across the country. More information available at www.crj.org